

University of Washington
College of Education
Autumn 2012

EDLPS 525: INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATIONAL INQUIRY (*Revised 11/5/12*)

Friday morning 8:30-10:5
3 Credits (Credit/No Credit)
Room: Smith 304
Breakout Rooms: Smith 109 and Smith 105

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If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to Debby and Phil so that we can discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

I. THE COURSE: AIMS AND OVERVIEW

EDLPS 525 is the first of a two-quarter sequence of courses (the "Inquiry Series") designed to introduce beginning Ph.D. students into the community of educational researchers. The Inquiry Series is NOT INTENDED TO GIVE STUDENTS DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING PARTICULAR STUDIES. Rather, these courses are concerned with one primary question:

What is educational inquiry?

At first glance, this question seems simple. But over time, it becomes apparent that defining "educational inquiry" entails wrestling with fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the self-definition of human knowers. It also calls on us to examine similarities and differences between various methodological traditions. Finally, it compels us to think seriously about the purposes, limits, and promises of educational research, and the responsibility we researchers have to the enterprise of education.

Debates about the nature, scope, and purpose of educational inquiry continue to capture the attention of educational researchers. The Inquiry Series will not resolve these debates. It will offer you a conceptual framework for thinking about and organizing the practical, philosophical, and political issues that arise when we try to define and conduct educational inquiry. We hope you will continue to fill in and modify this framework as you pursue specific methods courses, discover where your own research interests lie, develop your methodological dispositions and comfort zones, and proceed towards completing your dissertation.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Regular attendance.** This course is designed to be an integrated unit; each class session builds from previous sessions and leads to successive class activities. Class discussions depend heavily

on the input of each class member. Should you need to miss a class, please notify Gonzalo or Becky as soon as you can.

2. **Active participation.** Much of what goes on in this class depends upon thoughtful conversation in both small and large group formats. Active participation in these conversations requires you to:
 - Listen carefully to your classmates when they speak.
 - Ask questions when you do not understand what is being said.
 - Extend or advance a line of thought or conversation.
3. **Course readings.** You will be required to download and print each week's readings from E-Reserve. Please bring your printed copies of the articles to class; we will make frequent use of them during discussions.
4. **Short reflection papers.** Each week, you will *reflect* on one *methodological* issue or question that the course readings provoke for you. Your reflection will take the form of a short weekly paper. What does completing your weekly reflection papers entail?

Focus on methodology: The readings we have selected this quarter illustrate exemplary research across a range of research families: measurement (quantitative), interpretive (qualitative), and conceptual (philosophy, history, etc.). We have chosen these readings, not only because they do a good job of illustrating substantive issues and conclusions. More importantly for our class, the readings also illustrate issues pertaining to *methodology*. Methodology concerns the “how” of research, what researchers *do* as they conceive of, design, and implement their studies and justify their conclusions. As we will see, all researchers confront similar methodological questions decision-points, no matter which research family they are working in. Nevertheless, the way researchers think about and address these questions varies across the different research families.

Some of the articles we will read focus explicitly on methodology. Other articles do not focus on methodology per sé but rather take up substantive topics such as class size, differences in language usage between teachers and students, the nature of democratic education, etc. But even research studies that do not explicitly address methodological problems or questions nevertheless make assumptions about methodology and raise methodological issues.

While the *substantive* issues that the articles address are interesting and important, *we do not want you to focus on substantive conclusions or findings*. Instead we want you to identify and discuss issues concerning *methodology*. We want you to focus on the “how” of research, in other words, not on the “what” of research. We will provide tools and frameworks to help you “dig out” methodological issues and questions, even when methodology is not the explicit concern of an article. As the quarter progresses, you will become increasingly skilled at identifying and addressing methodological issues.

Reflection: What does it mean to *reflect on* a methodological issue? *Do not summarize the articles or provide an introduction to your paper*. Instead, jump right in. Clearly identify the methodological issue on which you want to focus and write about how you understand or perhaps do not understand the issue you have identified. What assumptions or expectations about

educational research are *you* bringing to the readings, and how exactly do the readings affirm, extend, challenge, and/or refute what you think you know about educational research?

Here are two possible ways you might reflect on the methodological issue that you identify:

(a) "*I don't understand this point because...*"

This material is challenging—it's okay to not understand it completely the first time through! To begin to "get clear," it is important to try and articulate *why* it is you may not understand something. Why, *specifically*, does a particular point confuse you? Does it run counter to an assumption that you've always held, but may not have recognized? Does the point contradict something that the author has said elsewhere? Does it contradict the views of another author that we've read? Is the point or argument hard to follow because it presumes ideas, which have not been fully explicated? Tell us!

(b) "*I think I really understand this material and I'd like to take it further...*"

Sometimes, you'll find yourself feeling really engaged with the methodological issues that an article raises. Great! Don't simply reiterate the salient points, however. Tell us *how, exactly, you'd like to extend the conversation*. Here are examples of ways you might do this:

- "The author's point seems to imply that..."
- "I could imagine a debate between Author X and Author Y. It would go something like this..."
- "The author has helped me understand my own situation more deeply because..."
- "I understand what the author is saying, but I disagree with him/her because..."

In sum, reading reflectively requires you to monitor and evaluate your understanding of what you read. This is one of the most valuable skills you can develop during your graduate education. Developing this skill takes practice, so be patient with your efforts.

Length: Weekly reflection papers are *short*. During Weeks 2, 3, 4, and 7 the length of your reflection will be *1-2 pages maximum, double-spaced, 12-point font*. During Weeks 5, 8, and 9, your reflection will consist of one paragraph of no more than *175 words, double-spaced, 12-point font*. We will not read portions of papers that exceed these limits.

Learning to express your ideas succinctly is a key professional skill. Research abstracts, proposals for funding and conferences, and executive summaries of findings are short. Many journals maintain strict page limits. Additionally, learning to express your ideas succinctly helps you focus and clarify your thinking.

Each week, plan to address no more than one or two methodological issues. The issue you address can arise in one article. Or it may come up in all of the readings for the week. Again, we will provide guidelines for helping you surface and address methodological questions and issues.

Procedure for submitting papers: Reflection papers are due on the Friday for which the readings have been assigned. This means that you will be writing and uploading your reflection paper *before* class each week. Writing your reflection ahead of class will give you an opportunity to organize your thoughts and clarify your questions *before* you talk about your ideas with your classmates and with us. Please upload your papers to “Collect It” *prior* to class each Friday. (For the course URL, see Point IV.2 below.) We will not accept reflection papers submitted as email attachments.

5. **End-of-Quarter exercise:** We'll provide details about this exercise after we've gotten further along in the course. The End-of-Quarter Exercise is due by *5 p.m. on Monday, December 10, 2012*. Upload your End-of-Quarter Exercise to “Collect It.” (For the course URL, see Point IV.2 below.) We will not accept End-of-Quarter Exercises submitted as email attachments.

III. GRADING

This class is graded "credit/no credit." To receive credit for this course, you must:

- 1.) Attend and participate in class; more than *3 absences* may result in a grade of “incomplete.”
- 2.) Submit acceptable weekly reflection papers.
- 3.) Submit an acceptable end-of-quarter exercise

IV. COURSE MATERIALS

There are two sets of materials for this course:

1. A text available at the UW Bookstore:

Judith L. Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia B. Elmore (eds.). (2006). *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*. Published for the American Educational Research Association by Lawrence Erlbaum, Inc.: Mahwah, NJ.

(This text will be used in EDLPS 526 as well.)

2. The following URL is the course web site. From that site you will find critical links used in the course, including a link to the *electronic reserve* (where you can download readings) and the UW web site used to *turn in all course assignments*.

<https://sites.google.com/site/uwedlps525/>

V. COURSE ORGANIZATION

After a brief introduction to the course and an overview of key issues in educational inquiry, we will explore three families or traditions of educational inquiry:

- *Measurement (“quantitative”) Family:* Methodological approaches include experiments (true experiments and quasi-experiments), surveys, correlational studies, single-subject designs, hierarchical linear modeling, etc. Research in this family relies heavily on operational definitions and psychometric procedures to give meaning to constructs (concepts). It also relies on subsequent statistical analyses and explanations based on statistical associations.

- *Interpretive (“qualitative”) Family:* Methodological approaches include ethnography, case studies, phenomenology, portraiture, narrative studies, etc. Research in this family relies heavily on researcher-constructed meaning based on contextualized field study. It also relies on interaction with, and content analyses of, what people say and do.
- *Conceptual Family:* Methodological approaches include philosophy, critical theory, various postmodern critiques, etc. Research in this family is used when the meanings of constructs are the very issues in question. These approaches rely heavily on discursive, normative, and dialectical arguments and analyses to clarify ideas and to critically examine assumptions and/or ideologies.

Although we will use these labels—*measurement*, *interpretive*, and *conceptual*—to try to sort out differences and similarities between reasonably distinguishable ways of knowing, these labels do not really do justice to the richness of each research family or tradition. Many specific methods and methodological approaches can be found within each family, and we cannot hope to cover them all in this course. Moreover, mixed methods approaches, drawing on traditions from more than one family, often are used in educational research.

To begin, we will consider “ways of seeing” (and not seeing) and examine how methodological families employ frameworks and “lenses.”

We then will spend a few weeks looking at examples of research from within each of three methodological families noted above. Each week during this part of the course, we will read and discuss contrasting pairs of research studies that represent two different methodological families. Contrasting methodologies can help you learn to see how methodological families both resemble and also differ one another. As we will see, similarities and differences between methodological families typically show up as assumptions (often unacknowledged) that researchers make. These assumptions have to do with the nature of the world, the nature of people as “knowers,” what knowing is like, what forms of knowledge are justified and why, the purposes of research, and the values that underlie the research process. Seven “Big Methodological Questions” will guide our examination of research assumptions during this part of the course. We will distribute the “Seven Big Questions” early in the quarter.

After completing this round of contrasts, we will delve into articles that will help us identify and unravel some of the deeper issues concerning researchers’ assumptions about knowledge, knowing, and being. We will look at the history of how we arrived at where we are today and will consider contentious methodological debates that presently engage researchers. Positivism, post-positivism, and post-modernism are among the key ideas we will explore in this part of the course.

This course itself is an inquiry. Where would you place it among the three methodological families we will explore this quarter? If you chose the third family, we agree. This course is primarily conceptual—it is a philosophical and critical inquiry about what it means to inquire into education. It also critically examines the assumptions that we make as we go about choosing and using various research methods.

VI. CALENDAR OF READINGS AND CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Key: CM = *Complementary Methods* textbook; E= E-Reserve Readings

Date	Meeting	Topics	Readings
9/28	#1	Welcome and introduction to the course <i>No reflection paper</i>	None
Contrasts and Comparisons: Reading and Reflecting on Examples of Studies from Three Major Families of Educational Inquiry			
10/5	#2	Disciplined inquiry: differences and commonalities among methodological families; multiple perspectives <i>Reflection paper: 1-2 pages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shulman (E) • Tyack (E) • Metz <i>Optional:</i> Packer (E)
10/12	#3	Measurement (“quantitative”) vis-à-vis Interpretive (“qualitative”) families: an experimental study and an ethnographic study <i>Reflection paper: 1-2 pages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finn and Achilles (E) • Brice Heath (E)
10/19	#4	Interpretive vis-à-vis Conceptual/Philosophical families: another ethnographic study and a selection from philosophy <i>Reflection paper: 1-2 pages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goldman and Booker (E) • Higgins and Abowitz (E)
10/26	#5	Conceptual vis-à-vis Measurement families <i>Reflection paper: 175 words</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levinson (E) • Steele 1997 (E) • Steele 2010 (E)

Methodologies: A Closer Look

11/2	#6	Getting into the methods of the Measurement, Interpretive, and Conceptual families <i>Reflection paper: 1-2 pages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porter (E) • Cook and Sinha (in CM, 551-565) <i>[Read Porter OR Cook & Sinah]</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wolcott (E) • Burbules and Warnick (in CM, 489-502) • Weisner
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Philosophy of Inquiry in Education: Crucial Issues

- 11/9** No class. We encourage you to attend the Diversity Conference, celebrating the launch of the SAGE Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education, edited by Dr. James Banks.
- 11/16 #7** Going deeper: Post-positivism
Reflection paper: 1-2 pages
- Phillips and Burbules (E)
 - Geertz (E)
- 11/23** No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday
- 11/30 #8** Going deeper: Post-modernism
Reflection paper: 175 words
- Rosaldo (E)
 - Harding (E)
 - Fine, Weiss, Weseen, Wong (E)
 - McCarthy Brown (E)
 - Optional: Kerdeman (E)*

Course Summary and Synthesis

- 12/7 #9** The Science of Educational Research
Reflection Paper: 175 words
- 7 articles from *Educational Researcher*, November 2002 (E)
 - AERA Definition (E)
- 12/10** **End-of-Quarter Exercise**
Upload to course website no later than 5:00 p.m.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF COURSE READINGS

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- Brice Heath, Shirley. (1982). Questioning at Home and at School: A Comparative Study. In G. Spindler (Ed.), *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling* (pp. 102-131). New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Burbules, Nicholas and Warnick, Bryan R. (2006). Philosophical Inquiry. In Judith L. Green et.al. *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research* (pp. 489-502). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
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- Educational Researcher* 31 (8). (November 2002). Theme Issue: Scientific Research in Education. Washington, D.C.: AERA
- Jacobson and White: Editor’s Introduction (3)
 - Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson: Scientific Culture and Educational Research (4-14)
 - Pellegrino & Goldman: Be Careful What You Wish For (15-17)
 - Berliner: Educational Research: The Hardest Science of All (18-20)
 - Erikson & Guiterrez: Culture, Rigor, and Science (21-24)
 - St. Pierre: “Science” Rejects Postmodernism (25-27)
 - Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson: Reply (28-29)
- Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Susan Weseen, and Loonmun Wong. (2003). “For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities.” In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues 2e* (pp. 107-131). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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- Levinson, Meira. (2011). Democracy, Accountability, and Education. *Theory and Research in Education* 9(2), 125-144. <http://tre.sagepub.com/content/9/2/125>
- McCarthy Brown, Karen. (April 15, 1992). Writing About “the Other.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
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